

Committee on the Teaching Profession

Charge: Identify recommendations to elevate and reinvigorate the teaching profession in South Carolina.

“In the next four or five years, we are going to be losing a large percentage of our most experienced, highly trained educators, and there is nothing that comes close to quantitatively or qualitatively replacing those people. We have got to find ways to attract better and brighter people into this profession and keep them.”

–Jim Rex

Education research makes clear that the major determinant of student achievement in any school is the quality and performance of the teaching staff. Funding, support services, and parent involvement are always important, but good teachers make the major difference.

Yet today, as large numbers of experienced educators retire and too few candidates emerge to replace them, South Carolina and the nation as a whole are facing a critical shortage of qualified teachers. The shortage is especially acute in math, physical sciences, foreign languages, and special education; among teachers of color; and in inner-city and rural areas.

The Transition Leadership Team’s Committee on the Teaching Profession reviewed a host of factors contributing to the shortage of qualified teachers. Too few qualified candidates are attracted to the teaching profession in the first place, primarily because of its low status and relatively low compensation. Too many who do choose to teach are inadequately prepared for real-world classrooms. And far too many good teachers abandon their profession within a few years for higher pay, more professional working conditions, and better opportunities for professional growth.

The Committee on the Teaching Profession issued seventeen recommendations in four areas that contribute to the development of a caring and qualified teaching workforce: teacher preparation, recruitment and retention, professional development, and leadership.

Recommendations

Preparation

1. Dr. Rex should establish a statewide Teacher Preparation Committee, including representatives from schools and districts, the SDE, and state colleges and universities, to ensure that students graduating from South Carolina’s teacher preparation programs are well prepared to meet the requirements of our public schools.

Recruitment and Retention

2. The SDE should create an overarching marketing strategy to attract high school students, undergraduates, career-changers, and out-of-state educators to South Carolina schools.
3. South Carolina should continue to support effective recruitment programs, including the Teaching Fellows program, the Teacher Loan program, and the Teacher Cadet program.
4. South Carolina should create compensation packages that make teaching attractive. Specifically, the state should:
 - Raise the annual teacher salary to the average salary of North Carolina and Georgia to enhance the state's competitiveness in attracting high-quality teachers;
 - Raise the cap on increments within the state salary schedule from 22 years to 28 years to reward veteran teachers;
 - Maintain the \$7,500 salary supplement for teachers with national board certification;
 - Increase the base pay for teachers in critical needs subject areas and in hard-to-staff, high-poverty schools;
 - Repay student loans for math and science teachers.
5. South Carolina should reduce the paperwork burden by providing clerical assistance to teachers.
6. South Carolina should fund comprehensive induction programs for new teachers, providing for networking, release time, and full-time mentor coaching.

Professional Development

7. Regional Centers should be created, possibly at colleges and universities, to foster collaboration between K–12 and postsecondary institutions, provide professional development opportunities, and assist local districts in developing their own high-quality professional development infrastructure.
8. The SDE should provide hands-on technical assistance to help schools develop creative ways of providing effective professional development within the school day.
9. The SDE should recommend tested and proven professional development approaches and create a model for evaluating professional development opportunities that emphasizes transformation of learning into practice, opportunity for reflection and analysis, and impact on student learning and professional growth.
10. The SDE should pursue additional funding for the Teacher Advancement Program.
11. The SDE should create an annual Superintendent's Award for effective professional development.

12. The SDE should establish a standing committee of educators, researchers, and community members to assess and recommend improvements in professional development.
13. The SDE should develop a process through which teachers can earn credit toward recertification by demonstrating an impact of their professional growth on student achievement.

Leadership

14. South Carolina should create a system that rewards effective teacher performance and establishes a teacher career progression system that includes leadership positions.
15. The SDE should establish and pilot a statewide teacher exchange program.
16. The SDE should create an enduring leadership development and growth continuum that delivers practical, rigorous, and relevant training to all school and district leaders. Educators should be encouraged to participate in the continuum of programs and services provided by the SDE's Office of School Leadership.
17. All schools should implement the Professional Learning Community model, with resources and training provided through virtual or demonstration centers.

Teachers should be encouraged to participate in a range of leadership activities, including school reform, professional development, research, and state and local governance.